

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 1996

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SUBJ: FIFTH CONFERENCE OF MILITARY COMMUNIST PART ORGANIZATION

1. SUMMARY: THE COMMUNIST PARTY ORGANIZATION IN THE YUGOSLAV PEOPLE'S ARMY (JNA) HAS ELECTED A NEW LEADERSHIP. COL. GEN. DJEMAL SARAC HAS BEEN RE-ELECTED SECRETARY, BUT 40 OF THE 60 MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ARE NEW. THE MOST NOTABLE DEPARTURE FROM THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS ADMIRAL MAMULA. WHILE THE PERSONNEL CHANGES WERE EXTENSIVE, THE SPEECHES CONTAINED STANDARD RHETORIC ABOUT THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE NATION'S STRENGTH. INITIAL IMPRESSION FROM CONFERENCE IS THAT JOVANIC AFFAIR HAS BEEN RESOLVED WITHOUT CRISIS IN MILITARY OR IN CIVILIAN-MILITARY RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. MAIN ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR THE TWO-DAY (MAR 29-30) FIFTH CONFERENCE OF LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS (LC) ORGANIZATIONS IN THE JAN WAS THE ELECTION OF A NEW COMMITTEE (EQUIVALENT TO A CENTRAL COMMITTEE), SECRETARIAT AND STANDING COMMISSIONS. REASONS FOR HOLDING THE CONFERENCE
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AT THIS TIME ARE NOT CLEAR. HOUSECLEANING MAY HAVE BEEN REQUIRED AFTER REPORTED PURGE OF COL. GEN. DJOKO JOVANIC AND ASSOCIATES LAST WINTER. (JOVANIC WAS REPORTEDLY OUSTED AFTER AN INTRIGUE AGAINST DEFENSE SECRETARY LJUBICIC.) ON THE OTHER HAND, LAST ELECTIONS WERE HELD ROUGHLY TWO YEARS AGO AND STATUTES MAY PROVIDE FOR TWO YEAR TERMS OF OFFICE.

3. FORTY OF THE SIXTY MEMBERS OF THE NEW COMMITTEE AND FIVE OF THE NINE MEMBERS OF THE SECRETARIAT ARE NEW. COMMANDER OF YUGOSLAV NAVY, ADMIRAL BRANKO MAMULA, HAS BEEN DROPPED BOTH FROM THE SECRETARIAT AND THE COMMITTEE. MAMULA THUS NO LONGER BELONGS TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IN THE MILITARY. THIS COULD BE BECAUSE OF THE PRESS OF OTHER DUTIES SINCE HE ADDED THE SPLIT MILITARY DISTRICT TO HIS PORTFOLIO LAST YEAR. OR HE COULD BE IN SOME POLITICAL DIFFICULTY.

4. COL. GEN. MILAN KRDZIC WAS REPLACED AS SECRETARY OF THE SECRETARIAT BY MAJOR GEN GEORGIJE JOVICIC, A FORMER MILITARY ATTACHE IN THE SOVIET UNION. KRDZIC WILL NOW HEAD THE STATUTORY COMMISSION. INTELLIGENCE CHIEF DANE CUIC REMAINS ON BOTH THE SECRETARIAT AND COMMITTEE, AS DOES ASSISTANT DEFENSE SECRETARY DANE PETKOVSKI. NAMING OF COL. GEN. STANE POTOCAR TO SECRETARIAT INDICATES THAT RUMORS OF HIS IMPENDING RESIGNATION ARE UNFOUNDED.

5. IN SPITE OF THE EXTENSIVE PERSONNEL CHANGES, PRESS REPORTS SHOW NO SIGN OF A CRISIS. SPEECHES CONTAINED STANDARD RHETORIC ABOUT THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY, MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND THE DEFENSIVE STRENGTH OF THE NATION. THE SENIOR PARTY OFFICIAL IN THE MILITARY, COL. GEN. DJEMAL SARAC, DID HINT AT POSSIBLE FRICTIONS BETWEEN THE MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND AND PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN MILITARY UNITS. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY ORGANIZATION DOES NOT NEED TO AND CANNOT REPLACE MILITARY ORGANS. HE
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STRESSED THAT THE PARTY ORGANIZATION, AS ITS OFFICIAL NAME INDICATES, IS PART OF THE ARMY AND NOT SEPARATE FROM IT.

6. LC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STANE DOLANC, THE ONLY CIVILIAN TO SPEAK, ASSURED THE CONFERENCE OF THE NATION'S WILLINGNESS TO BEAR THE COSTS OF DEFENSE. HE SAID THAT NO ONE HAS EVER QUESTIONED A SINGLE DINAR SPENT ON DEFENSE. (MILITARY LEADERS WERE UNHAPPY WITH THEIR ALLOCATION IN LAST YEAR'S BUDGET, AND THEIR SHARE WAS INCREASED FOR 1977.) LC EXEC COMMITTEE SECRETARY JURE BILIC IS SHOWN IN A PHOTO AS HAVING ATTENDED BUT IS NOT LISTED AS HAVING SPOKEN.

7. PRESIDENT TITO, WHO IS NOW IN BUGOJNO, SENT A LETTER TO THE MEETING. IT SAID THAT YUGOSLAVIA IS EXPOSED TO CONTINUOUS PRESSURES AND THREATS. "IMPERIALISTIC AND HEGEMONISTIC FORCES CONSTANTLY TRY, RELYING ON THE INTERNAL ENEMY, TO SHAKE OUR UNITY AND WEAKEN OUR INTERNATIONAL

POSITION AND REPUTATION IN THE WORLD."

8. DEFENSE SECRETARY LJUBICIC IN HIS SPEECH EMPHASIZED THE THREAT OF IMPERIALISM. HE SAID THE NONALIGNED COUNTRIES AND PARTICULARLY YUGOSLAVIA ARE THE CONSTANT TARGET OF IMPERIALIST FORCES BECAUSE THEY HAVE ENCOURAGED POSITIVE TRENDS IN THE WORLD AND DEALT A VIOLENT BLOW TO IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM AND THOSE ASPIRING TOWARDS HEGEMONY AND DOMINATION.

9. SARAC GAVE STATISTICS ABOUT PARTY MEMBERSHIP IN THE MILITARY. HE SAID THAT THE 90,000 COMMUNISTS IN THE JNA CONSTITUTE BETWEEN 6 AND 6.5 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE LCY. OVERALL, 98.5 PERCENT OF THE OFFICERS, INCLUDING ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF THE YOUNG OFFICERS, ARE COMMUNISTS. OVER 24,000 ENLISTED MEN BELONG TO THE PARTY. SARAC ACKNOWLEDGED WEAKNESS IN THE PARTY'S
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RECRUITING AMONG ENLISTED MEN FROM THE RURAL AREAS. HE SAID THAT IN 1976 OVER 30 PERCENT OF NEW RECRUITS BUT ONLY 5 PERCENT OF NEW PARTY MEMBERS CAME FROM FARMING BACKGROUNDS.

10. COMMENT: IN HIS SPEECH KRDZIC EXPLAINED THE PERSONNEL CHANGES THROUGHOUT THE ARMY'S LC ORGANIZATION AS PART OF A PROCESS OF ADVANCING YOUNGER PEOPLE. HE SAID THAT VARIOUS ILL-INTENTIONED COMMENTARIES IN THE FOREIGN PRESS HAD APPEARED BEFORE AND WOULD PRABABLY APPEAR AGAIN BECAUSE OF SUCH CHANGES, BUT HE ATTRIBUTED THESE COMMENTS TO THE "WELL-KNOWN PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR BEING WAGED AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA." YOUNGER OFFICERS MAY WELL BE MOVING UP, BUT SOME OF THE CHANGES PROBABLY RELATE TO THE PURGE OF COL. GEN. DJOKO JOVANIC LAST WINTER. THE UNEXCEPTIONAL TONE OF THE SPEECHES AT THE CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, DOES SUGGEST THAT THE ARMY HAS NOT GONE THROUGH AN UPHEAVAL BECAUSE OF THE JOVANIC AFFAIR NOR HAS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE MILITARY BEEN SHAKEN.

11. SARAC HAS BEEN RECONFIRMED AS THE SENIOR COMMUNIST OFFICIAL IN THE MILITARY IN SPITE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF MANDATORY ROTATION WHICH SOME ARGUE SHOULD APPLY TO ALL GOVT AND PARTY JOBS. HIS RE-ELECTION MAY SET A HELPFUL PRECEDENT FOR OTHERS (DOLANC?) WHO MAY WISH TO BE RE-ELECTED IN THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS NEXT YEAR.
YORK

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